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ABSTRACT

After acquiescing to a small initial request, people typically are more susceptible to a later call for assistance. This foot-in-the-door phenomenon was examined based on principles of social reinforcement. In Experiment 1, subjects induced to perform the same initial prosocial behaviors were found to be differentially susceptible to a later request as a function of the outcome of the initial interaction. In conjunction with an additional series of comparisons, these results indicated support for the reinforcement position, and inconsistency with the usual self-perception explanation of the phenomenon. In Experiment 2, the provision of different levels of reinforcement during the initial contact resulted in systematic variation in acquiescence to a later request, again consistent with the reinforcement model. (Author)

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Social Reinforcement, Self-perception, and the Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon

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Social Reinforcement, Self-perception, and the Foot-in-the-Door Phenomenon

"To persuade another to perform a major service on your behalf, first become indebted to him." This adage, so long established as to aspire to the status of one of Campbell's (1974a, b) "well-winnowed superstitions," typifies the foot-in-the-door (FITD) phenomenon, first formalized by Freedman and Fraser (1966) more than a decade ago. In their original experiment on this effect, Freedman and Fraser induced subjects to perform a minor, perhaps trivial, favor on their behalf (answering a brief series of questions). The subjects who answered these questions were found later to be considerably more compliant to a larger request than a comparable group of persons who had not been approached in the initial phase of the experiment. In explaining their findings, the authors identified the locus of differential susceptibility in the altered self-perceptions of the compliant subjects: "Once he has agreed to a request, his attitude may change. He may become, in his own eyes, the kind of person who does this sort of thing, who agrees to requests made by strangers, who takes action on the things he believes" (Freedman & Fraser, 1966, p. 201). Later replicative research by Pliner, Hart, Kohl, and Saari (1974) supported these observations, and suggested the relevance of Bem's (1970, 1972) self-perception theory for findings of this nature. Following these studies, a series of experiments designed to investigate the boundary conditions of the phenomenon were conducted (Cann, Sherman & Elkes, 1975; Harris, 1972; Seligman, Bush, & Kirsh, 1976; Snyder & Cunningham, 1975; Uranowitz, 1975), and these produced data generally consistent with the theoretical expectations of self-perception theory.

Although the experimental literature is relatively univocal in its appeal to self-percpetion as the explanatory mechanism of the FITD phenomenon (but see Kraut, 1973, and Study 1 of Dejong & Funder, 1977), we find this application of Bem's (1972) model somewhat unpersuasive. On theoretical grounds, it is difficult to accept the necessary assumption that a person's compliance with a trivial request would result in even a minor modification of that person's self-concept. Indeed, such changes seem especially unlikely in light of Jones and Nisbett's (1971) well-documented postulate that actors typically view the external circumstances surrounding their behaviors as causal, while

attributing dispositional causes to the actions of others. If such is the case, then the trivial one-shot experimental treatments employed in the usual FITD studies could not reasonably be thought to have much impact on the self-perceptions of relatively uninvolved actors. In terms of application, the usual explanation of the phenomenon also appears wanting, in that it does not clearly specify the kinds of cognitive and affective changes that might result as the result of acquiescing to a simple request (see Staub, 1978, p. 221), and thus is mute with respect to the types of operations that might be employed to capitalize upon the effect.

Accordingly, we wish to suggest an alternative conceptualization of the FITD effect, based on well-established principles of social reinforcement. This alternative is not necessarily antagonistic to the usual self-perception explanation, but it handles the existing data more persuasively, we believe, and also suggests field applications that appear beyond the predictive boundaries of Bem's model.

Our approach takes as its empirical point of departure the helping behavior research of Clark (1975) and Moss and Page (1972). Both of these studies demonstrated the propensity of subjects once rewarded for an altruistic act to enter into further altruistic interactions. This tendency was found to operate even though the second helping occasion occurred in circumstances different from that of the original, and called for the performance of a different set of altruistic actions to be emitted on behalf of a "victim" different from that encountered in the first interaction.

In developing our alternative to the self-perception explanation, we begin with the observation that most people in most societies are taught to respond to others in a responsible, prosocial manner. From their earliest socialization experiences, children are told to be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, etc., and they are reinforced for behaving in this manner. In Miller and Dollard's (1941) terms, positive affect becomes "attached" to prosocial behavior as a consequence of the socialization process. Aronfreed and Paskal (1965), Bryan (1972), Moss and Page (1972), and Midlarsky and Bryan (1967), among others, have provided empirical demonstrations of the manner in which the attachment of positive affect with altruistic behavior occurs. In the specific case of the FITD phenomenon, this theoretical approach appears readily capable of subsuming the

general data pattern observed in past research. The social reinforcement formulation fosters the hypothesis that those who complied with the minor requests of past FITD studies found the experience to be pleasant or reinforcing. They had freely provided a service to another, had been able to fulfill the request for assistance without any major expenditure, and were probably thanked for their efforts. In Freedman and Fraser's (1966, p. 97) study, for example, the subject in the initial contact session "was asked a series of eight innocuous questions dealing with household soaps... She was then thanked for her cooperation, and the contact was terminated" (our emphasis). After an experience of this type, the telephone interview situation might well have taken on reinforcing properties.[1] When asked two days later to engage in a similar experience, it seems likely that the subject's immediate past history of reinforcement would operate in favor of a positive response.

At first glance, the social reinforcement formulation might appear quite similar to the self-perception approach; however, though both positions embrace various aspects of Skinner's (1957) radical behaviorism, they suggest very different mechanisms to account for the phenomenon. Bem (1972) has employed Skinner's mand/tact distinction to explicate the manner in which individuals come to determine their own attitudes and dispositions. He suggests that the greater the reward an individual is offered to perform a behavior, the less likely that individual is to conclude that the behavior truly reflects his or her disposition. Note that this position holds the magnitude of reinforcement prior to acquiescence (or behavior) to be critical; the effect of post-acquiescence reinforcement on subsequent behavior has received little theoretical emphasis. Thus, in explaining the FITD effect, the theory holds that the compliant subjects of past research concluded that they were positively disposed to telephone interviews since they had freely participated in just such an event. In short, subjects' modified self-attributions were seen to mediate acquiescence to subsequent requests for assistance.

The social reinforcement orientation, on the other hand, employs principles of operant conditioning in its analysis of the FITD effect. Applied to this phenomenon, the social reinforcement position suggests that the more reinforcing the initial contact, the more likely one is to agree to a subsequent interview. Variations in self-attributions are not a necessary conse-

quence of one's participation in a brief telephone interview, though they are not ruled out in our formulation. That is, we do not necessarily insist that different self-perceptions are not formed as a function of participation (or nonparticipation) in an altruistic action, but rather that an accurate prediction concerning behavior in these circumstances can be made without appealing to the more abstract, untested features of the actor's self-concept. As such, we believe that our explanation, if supported, will provide a more parsimonious account of the phenomenon than that proffered by self-perception theory.

To this point, the available research evidence does not allow for a clear choice between the rival alternative explanations. It is the purpose of the experiments that follow to provide the basis for such a comparison. While the evidence to be obtained will necessarily be circumstantial, given the common theoretical heritage of both explanations, we believe that the results of the studies that follow will allow for a reasonable choice between the alternatives.

The experimental arrangements of the first study of this report were structured in such a way that subjects in the minor initial request conditions left the initial situation in either a positive or negative affective state. These subjects' susceptibility to a later request was then assessed. Our approach allows for a disentanglement of the predictions of the competing models, since both reinforced and punished compliant subjects will have performed identical actions, voluntarily, under identical surrounding conditions. Therefore, they would be expected by Bem's theory to have formed identical self-perceptions, and thus to respond identically (and positively) to a second request. The social reinforcement approach, on the other hand, would postulate that only those leaving the initial request situation in a positive affective state would be likely to respond favorably to the second request. Similarly, in conditions in which subjects are induced to refuse a request, Bem's model apparently (cf. Snyder & Cunningham, 1975) predicts an attenuation in acquiescence to a later request; the social reinforcement position fosters no such expectation. According to our approach, the refusal of an unreasonable request will have no effect on compliance to subsequent requests.

Experiment 1

Method

Subjects and Experimenters

A total of 160 adult females, chosen at random from the telephone directory of a medium-sized midwestern city, constituted the sample. Subjects were assigned randomly to one of five treatment-control conditions.

Eight male undergraduates served as experimenters. Each initially contacted by telephone a total of 16 subjects, after randomly assigning four to each of four experimental conditions of the study. In addition, these experimenters chose, but did not contact, four subjects who were later to serve as controls. After the first contact, each experimenter exchanged his list of 20 names (and telephone numbers) with another experimenter. The women on each list were then called two days later by an experimenter who was blind to the subject's treatment condition. Thus, differences between treatment conditions cannot be attributed to experimenter artifacts.

Procedure

All treatment group subjects were called on the same day (a Wednesday), during the afternoon between the hours of 1:00 and 4:00 PM. Only female respondents were employed; if a male answered the telephone, the experimenter asked to speak to the "lady of the house." One of four treatment conditions were effected in this phase of the experiment. Subjects were asked to participate in either a very brief or a very extended interview. The three minor request conditions were structured so that subjects left the experimental situation in either a positive, or a negative, affective state. The reinforcement contingencies that operated within the "minor request-positive outcome" conditions were similar to those of the typical FITD experiment. In the "minor request-negative outcome" condition, an attempt was made to forestall the attachment of positive reinforcement to the subjects' prosocial actions by not thanking them, by implying that their apparently altruistic behavior was of no utility to the recipient of their "favor," and by terminating the interview in an abrupt fashion. This "punishment" condition fosters the expectation of either (a) a reduced rate of acquiescence to later calls for assistance relative to that of an untreated control group, or (b) no differences between punished and control subjects (see Walters & Grusec, 1977, for a theoretical discussion of the variable effects of punishment on behavior). Subjects in a fourth experimental condition were asked to participate in an extended interview which almost all invariably refused.

Two days after the first request, all experimental subjects, along with

the controls who had not been contacted initially, were called by another experimenter who identified himself as associated with a research group different from that of the first interviewer. A moderate request was made of all subjects in this phase of the study (a 15-20 minute interview, consisting of 30 questions). The single dependent measure of the study was the subjects' response to this request.

Manipulations

Minor request - positive outcome. In this condition, subjects in the initial contact were read the following script: "Hello, my name is------of the Consumer's Interest Group. We are calling you today to ask if you would be willing to answer 10 short questions over the telephone concerning your use of various beverages. This should only take about four or five minutes of your time. Would you be willing to cooperate?" If the subject agreed to this minor request, she was asked 10 questions, most of which dealt with her preferred brands of coffee and soft drinks, the quantity and type of milk typically purchased, her use of nonreturnable bottles, etc. The first question of the interview asked the subject to identify the number of people in her household.

At the completion of the interview, the experimenter replied: "Thank you very much, you've been very helpful. We think this research is very important, and the information you've provided will enable us to benefit consumers like yourself. Thank you again for your cooperation."

Minor request - negative outcome. Initially the same script and questions outlined above were employed in this condition of the experiment. After having completed the 10-item interview, however, the experimenter, reflecting back to the first item, said, "Oh, did you say there were--people in your household?" When the subject responded affirmately, the experimenter stated, "I can't use your answers. I was supposed to deal with households of more (or less) than five persons." After the subject responded to this information, the experimenter abruptly terminated the interaction. Care was taken to insure that no positively reinforcing statements (e.g., "Well, thanks for you time," "Sorry we couldn't use your information," etc.) were emitted at the completion of the interview, thus forestalling the attachment of positive affect to the cooperative behavior of the subjects. This treatment was designed to provide a mildly unpleasant interview experience, one whose impact

would generalize to later telephone interview situations.

Minor request - positive outcome (control). This control condition was included to determine whether observed differences between the positive and negative outcome groups could be attributed to subjects' differing perceptions of the importance of the interview or the competence of the interviewers, rather than to the differential provision of post-interivew reinforcement. Recall that in the positive outcome condition, subjects were told that the research was "very important," while the negative outcome subjects were not. In addition, positive outcome subjects might have perceived the telephone interviewer (and interviewers in general) as more competent than did the negative outcome subjects. Lastly, subjects' altruistic behavior in the positive outcome condition was clearly more useful than in the negative condition. The present condition controls for these differences, since it was identical to the negative outcome condition, except that the experimenter terminated the interaction in a pleasant or reinforcing manner, as follows: "Did you say there were--people in your household? I'm afraid I've goofed. I was supposed to deal with households of more (or less) than five persons. It seems that we have already interviewed an adequate number of smaller (larger) families. I'm sorry that I cannot use your answers, but I would like to thank you for your help anyway. Thanks again, and have a nice day."

Major request. In this condition, the script read as follows: "Hello, my name is ------ of the Consumers Interest Group. We are calling you today to ask if you would be willing to come into the university and complete a rather lengthy questionnaire regarding the types of beverages you use, some time on Friday afternoon. This will take about 1 3/4 hours of your time. Would you be willing to cooperate?" The two (of 32) subjects who agreed to this request were told that they would be contacted later regarding the exact time and place of the interview. For all others care was taken to insure that the experimenter did not reinforce the (non-cooperative) behavior of subjects in this treatment condition.

Second Request

Two days after the initial contact, all subjects were called by an experimenter blind to the respondent's treatment condition. The experimenter introduced himself as follows: "Hello Mrs.-------my name is----. I'm a student at -------- University doing a class project on motor vehicle safety.

We're calling you today to ask if you would be willing to aid us in our study by answering 30 questions over the telephone concerning your winter driving habits. This should only take about 15 or 20 minutes of your time. Would you be willing to cooperate?" The subject's response constituted the dependent measure. If the subject answered affirmatively, the experimenter explained that he would put her name on a list of possible respondents to be contacted later.

Results

A summary of subjects' responses to the second request as a function of treatment condition is presented in Table 1. Four subjects who had participated in the initial interview could not be reached for the second request, and this explains the minor variation in the number of respondents within each condition.

Insert Table 1 about here

The first series of data analyses were concerned with the issue of replication. Appropriate comparisons of selected results of this investigation disclosed a high degree of overlap with previous studies.[2] As was argued earlier, it is possible that subjects experienced a positive outcome as a result of their acquiescence in most past research which involved a minor initial request condition. This same phenomenological state was approximated in the "minor request-positive outcome" treatment of the present experiment. In comparing the proportion of acquiescent subjects observered in this condition with that of the control group (a conceptual replication of Freedman and Fraser, 1966), we find a significantly greater proportion of compliant subjects in the minor request than in the control condition ($\hat{p}$ = .656, .312, respectively, $z = 2.751$, $p < .005$. This finding is in essential agreement with those of most past research in this area.

In Snyder and Cunningham's (1975) experiment, a major (initial) request condition was included, and the responses of subjects in this variation compared with those of subjects who had acquiesced to a minor request (see also Cann et al., 1975). The present study also included a major request treatment, and a comparison of the proportion of acquiescent subjects in this condition versus that of the minor request-positive outcome group disclosed a

finding that replicated both Snyder and Cunningham and Cann et al. The proportion of acquiescent subjects in the minor request-positive outcome condition was significantly greater than that observed in the major request group ($\hat{p}$ = .656, .226, respectively, z = 3.437, p < .001).

Given that the usual FITD effect was obtained, the comparisons of most interest were those involving the minor initial request conditions that were accompanied by either a positive or a negative outcome. Despite the fact that subjects in both of these conditions performed the same behaviors, under the identical eliciting circumstances, and thus by Bem's theory should have formed similar self-perceptions, there was a major difference in acquiescence proportions between these two groups, with significantly more positive-outcome subjects acquiescing to the second request than those who had experienced a negative outcome at the completion of the first interview ($\hat{p}$ = .656, .310, respectively, z = 2.699, p < .005).

A comparison of the results of the major request and control groups also supports the social reinforcement position over the self-perception model. According to the self-perception explanation, subjects who refused the major request should have become less acquiescent to the target request than those in the control group. The social reinforcement position, on the other hand, fostered the expectation of no difference in acquiescence between the major request and control group (if care was taken to control the provision of reinforcement or punishment at the completion of the initial interaction), and none was observed ($\hat{p}$ = .226, .312, respectively, z = .775, ns.). As would be expected on the basis of these results, and of the social reinforcement position developed in this report, no significant differences were observed in comparisons involving the negative outcome group with either the control subjects ($\hat{p}$ = .310, .312, respectively, z = -.018) or the major initial request condition ($\hat{p}$ = .310, .226, respectively, z = .740).

A final series of comparisons involving the subjects of the minor request-positive outcome (control) condition lend further support to the social reinforcement interpretation. As noted earlier, this control condition was included to inspect the rival alternative hypotheses that differences between the positive and negative outcome groups were a function of subjects' differential evaluations of the importance of their contribution or of the compliance of the typical telephone interviewer. Presumably, a person whose

immediate past history had included an unsatisfying interaction with an incompetent interviewer would be unlikely to volunteer his or her services later in a similar situation. As the data of Table 1 indicate, however, it was not the competence of the first interviewer, nor the apparent magnitude of their contribution that affected subjects' later acquiescence rates, but rather the interviewer's provision of social reinforcement. Consistent with our reinforcement-based orientation, the proportion of subjects in the minor request-positive outcome (control) group willing to comply with the second request was similar to that of the minor request-positive outcome group ($\hat{p}$ = 0.718, .656, respectively, z=.44, ns), and significantly exceeded that of the minor request-negative outcome group ($\hat{p}$ = .718, .310, respectively, $z = 3.19$, $p < .001$), the major request group ($\hat{p}$ = .718, .226, respectively, $z = 3.92$, $p < .001$), and the control subjects ($\hat{p}$ = .718, .312, respectively, $z = 3.25$, $p < .001$).

Experiment 2

While the data pattern of the first investigation matches the theoretical predictions of the social reinforcement position more closely than those of the self-perception model, it is conceivable that the experimental arrangements of the study might be viewed as biased in favor of such an outcome. It might be argued, for example, that the provision of a negative experience at the completion of the first interview removed this treatment condition from the predictive realm of self-perception theory. Alternatively, it is possible that a positive change in self-perception was induced in the negative group, but that this effect was overshadowed by the outcome of this condition. The implied restrictions that either of these rival hypotheses place on the range of phenomena to which self-perception theory could be applied are severe, however, and would call into question the general utility of Bem's model. At this point, a theoretical discussion of the relative merits of self-perception and social reinforcement for the FITD phenomenon is perhaps best deferred, and a second study which focuses on the predictive efficiency of these competing approaches proposed.

Suppose that instead of contrasting the effects of a positive or negative outcome in the initial interview situation on later acquiescence, we focused on the effect of the provision of different initial levels of positive reinforcement on later behavior. It is in situations of positive reinforcement

that the bulk of research in this area has been conducted, and since the self-perception approach is the favored theoretical explanation of this phenomenon, it is clear that such an experiment should fall within the predictive boundaries of the theory. According to Bem's formulation, however, people are not particualarly sensitive to minor variations in internal stimuli: "The thrust of the Skinnerian analysis of self-attributions is not that we can make no discriminations among internal stimuli, but only that we are far more severely limited than we suppose in this regard because the verbal community is limited in how extensively it can train us to make such discriminations" (Bem, 1972, p. 40). Thus, in the absence of a very major discrepancy in the positivity of the initial outcome, self-perception theory would predict little difference in acquiescence to a later request. Contrary to the self--perception prediction, a social reinforcement orientation would foster the expectation that the more reinforcing the initial compliance behavior, the more likely that positive affect would be associated with the general telephone interview situation; thus, the probability of acquiescence in later, similar, situations would be increased as a function of the initial magnitude of reinforcement.

Method

Overview

The general outline of this investigation closely resembles that of the first study. Experimental subjects were asked to participate in a brief telephone survey, and were differentially reinforced during, and at the completion of, the interview. Two days later, these same individuals were contacted again by an interviewer ostensibly unrelated to the original survey, and asked to participate in another, more extensive, research exercise. Comparison of the proportion of acquiescent subjects within the two differentially reinforced treatment groups, and between these groups and an untreated control group, constituted the primary research question.

Subjects and Experimenters

As before, participation in this study was limited to female respondents. Twenty-five subjects chosen at random from the telephone directory were assigned to each of three conditions of this experiment. For the first (minor request) interview, a single male experimenter contacted all of the 50 experimental subjects. Two days later, these same subjects, along with an addition-

groups with the control subjects. Consistent with the results of earlier research, it was found that the subjects in both minor request conditions proved more acquiescent to the second request than the control subjects. This result held for the minor request-normal comparison with the controls ($\hat{p}$ = 0.56, .32, respectively, $z = 1.71$, $p < .05$) and more strongly for the minor request-extensive, control comparison ($\hat{p}$ = .76, .32, respectively, $z = 3.12$, $p<.001$).

Insert Table 2 about here

It is apparent on the basis of these results that subjects reinforced during the initial interview were more likely than subjects who received only the normal treatment to comply with a later, unrelated solicitation. A direct comparison of the acquiescence proportions of the minor request-extensive and the minor request-normal groups provides additional support for this observation ($\hat{p}$ = 0.76, .56, respectively, $z = 1.49$, $p = .068$). While this last comparison only borders on statistical significance, it should be recognized that the differences between the two treatment conditions were very slight.

Discussion

The appeal of self-perception theory as an explanatory device for the FITD phenomenon lies in its apparent simplicity. In the typical experiment in this area, subjects are induced with minimal pressure to perform a trivial, but apparently prosocial, action on behalf of another. On the basis of such behaviors, the actor presumably alters his self-perception, becoming, "in his own eyes, the kind of person who does this sort of thing, who agrees to requests made by strangers, who takes action on the things he believes" (Freedman & Fraser, 1966, p. 201). The transfer from theory to behavior in this circumstance is both simple and compelling. But when the same logic is employed to predict the subsequent actions of people who have been induced to refuse an initial request, the easy transfer is no longer so evident. A simple extension of Freedman and Fraser's observation might foster the presumption that a person who had refused to act altruistically would come to think of himself as "the kind of person who does not do this sort of thing, who does not agree to requests made by strangers, who takes no actions on the things he believes in, who does not cooperate with good causes." Such a change

in one's self-evaluation as a result of a refusal to perform a rather major service on behalf of an unknown other strikes us as unlikely. On the other hand, the self-perception theorist might argue that no such negative impact on the self-concept would ensue, but rather that the individual would come to think of him/herself as strongly individualistic, resistant to the inticements of telephone salespersons, etc. If this line of reasoning is adopted, however, the theoretical implications of any action for a person's self-concept become very problematic. In large part, this lack of predictive clarity comes about as a function of the relative abstractness of the processes thought to operate in the self-perception process. While it is quite possible that one's self-percept would change as a function of some minor behavioral variation, it is obvious at this point that an unambiguous assessment of these (probably minor) changes is well beyond our present level of psychometric sophistication. The social reinforcement explanation of the phenomenon, on the other hand, has the advantage of a relatively straitforward specification of the processes thought to operate, and is much more obviously tied to observable events than the self-perception model. From the standpoint of theoretical explicitness, therefore, it seems clear that social reinforcement is the preferred approach--if the relationships thought to operate on the basis of this orientation are, in fact, demonstrated.

The empirical evidence of the present research provides evidence consistent with the suggested theoretical alternative. Consider, for example, the results of Experiment 1. In this study, subjects were induced to perform a very minor service on behalf of a telephone interviewer. As expected, those individuals tested under the "standard operating procedures" of the minor--request experimental conditions were found to be more susceptible to a later, more extensive, call for assistance then either control subjects or those who were induced to refuse the (large) initial request.[3] No clear choice between the usual self-perception approach and the social reinforcement alternative is warranted on the basis of these findings; however, a comparison of the responses of the minor request-negative outcome subjects with those of the other treatment groups does provide grounds for such a choice, and in each case, the weight of evidence supports our alternative position. Under identical surrounding conditions, the negative-outcome subjects agreed to, and performed, exactly the same behaviors as those individuals in the minor

request-positive outcome condition. Yet, they proved very resistant to the second request. If people identify their attitudes or internal states "by inferring them from observations of their own overt behavior and/or the circumstances in which this behavior occurs," as Bem (1972, p. 2) has suggested, then it seems clear that the proportion of acquiescent subjects in the minor request-negative outcome group should have been identical to that of the positive outcome treatment condition. Subjects in both groups had agreed to, and had taken part in, the identical initial interview situation--their overt behaviors, in self-perception terms, were the same. Similarly, the circumstances under which the original behavior was induced were identical for both groups. On the basis of these communalities, similar self-attributions and, therefore, similar (affirmative) responses to the second request, are predicted on the basis of the self-perception formulation. The fact that the interviewer in the negative outcome condition was incompetent, or impolite, should not have had any influence on the actor's positive self-attribution. Obviously, however, such actions did have a very appreciable effect on subjects' responses. The differences that were observed between these two treatment conditions, however, were exactly consistent with the expections of the social reinforcement formulation.

The outcome of the minor request-positive outcome (control) condition provides further support for our alternative interpretation. Subjects in this control variation were induced to participate in the initial interview under the same conditions as those of the positive and negative outcome experimental groups. This control condition varied from the positive outcome treatment in terms of the interviewer's apparent competence, and the apparent importance or utility of the subjects' contribution; it was similar in that positive reinforcement for participation was provided. The differences that characterized these two conditions were apparently unimportant, as acquiescence rates were nearly identical between the two groups. This result highlights the crucial role of initial reinforcement on later acquiescence in the FITD context.

A very different data pattern emerged in the comparison of results between the positive outcome (control) group with those of the negative outcome subjects. These groups differed only in terms of the interviewer's behavior after the subject had been informed that her participation was of no utility. Subjects in both conditions must have formed similar perceptions of

the interviewer's competence, and it was made very clear to both groups that their time had been wasted. Yet, the provision of reinforcement for participation in the positive outcome (control) group resulted in significantly more acquiescence to the second request than that observed in the minor request--negative outcome group.

It is apparent that the outcome of the initial interview played a major role in subjects' decisions to acquiesce or to resist a later interview request. Variations in the outcome of an act is not a feature easily integrated within the predictive confines of self-perception theory, as the approach places unique emphasis on the behaviors emitted in a situation, rather than the result of the behaviors, per se. Bem's (1965: 199) well-known "brown bread" example is a clear illustration of this emphasis: "When the answer to the question, 'Do you like brown bread' is, 'I guess I do, I'm always eating it,' it seems unnecessary to invoke a fount of priviledged self-knowledge to account for the reply." Notice that the outcome of the behavior--relief of hunger, the pleasant taste of the bread, etc.--plays no role in the explanation. Given this view of "motivation," it is obvious that the theory cannot, without major modification, be made to account for the results of Experiment 1.

By way of contrast, the results of this experiment conform precisely to the expectations formed on the basis of a social reinforcement position. We assume that people in most societies find it pleasant to help others, especially if their altruistic activity is of the low cost variety (see Gruder & Cook, 1971; Howard & Crano, 1974; Schwartz, 1968). If the outcome of the minor request treatment condition of the typical FITD experiment was reinforcing, then participating subjects would be susceptible to later requests of a similar nature. The results of Experiment 1, and those of most past studies in this area of research, are consistent with this interpretation. If the hypothesized reinforcement mechanism enhances acquiescence, then punishing such behavior, as in the minor request-negative outcome condition of the first study, would serve to reduce subjects' compliance to the same level (or below - see Walters & Grusek, 1977) of an untreated control group. The findings of the first experiment conformed to this expectation, and thus serve to support the social reinforcement position. Similarly, the failure to detect a difference between the major request group and the control subjects is also consis-

tent with the predictions of the social reinforcement model, and inexplicable in terms of the self-perception approach, if one accepts the findings of Snyder and Cunningham (1975) and Cann et al. (1975) as supportive of Bem's position. In the major request treatment of the present study, the subject's initial refusal was neither reinforced nor punished (as in Kraut's, 1973, experiment). These subjects were therefore theoretically identical to the untreated control group when contacted two days later. Under such circumstances, the social reinforcement position predicted no differences in later acquiescence between these two groups, and none was observed.

As noted, the failure to detect a difference between the major request and control conditions of Experiment 1 is contrary to the results reported earlier by Cann et al. (1975) and Snyder and Cunningham (1975). A possible insight into this between-study variation is provided in the interview termination procedures prescribed in the present experiment. Recall that experimenters were carefully instructed to end the major request interview without providing any reinforcement to the noncooperative subjects. On the other hand, in the previous experiments, those refusing the large request might well have been reinforced by a positive interviewer response at the completion of the interaction (e.g., "We appreciate yourconsideration of our request," or "Sorry you're unable to help out. Thanks anyway," etc.). Under such circumstances, subjects' refusal behavior might have been reinforced, and thus greater resistance to future requests (relative to an untreated group) would be expected. This is exactly the result reported in previous research. In the present experiment, however, where refusals were not reinforced, no differences between major request and control subjects were predicted, and none was observed.

In summary, the pattern of results of Experiment 1 was clearly anticipated by the social reinforcement approach. In every case, the hypothesized outcomes were observed. Conversely, without the postulation of a number of limiting assumptions, self-perception theory could account for only a small fraction of the observed data pattern.[4]

The second experiment of this report represented primarily an attempt to inspect the boundaries of the social reinforcement position. If subjects who have been mildly reinforced for their prosocial behavior prove susceptible to later requests for assistance, then those strongly reinforced should be even

more acquiescent. The self-perception prediction in this circumstance is not obvious, since both groups would have performed identical initial behaviors, and thus would be expected to generate the same altruistic self-inferences. On the other hand, different "internal states" might be induced by variations in the reinforcement levels accompanying the initial behavior, and thus result in variations in self-perceptions between the groups. Of course, this assumes that people are relatively sensitive to minor differences in internal states, a theoretical presumption that Bem (1972, p. 40) has rejected. A third reading of Bem's theory suggests yet another possibility. Unlike the first investigation of this report, the experimental arrangements of Experiment 2 called for the provision of a series of positive reinforcements for subjects in the minor request-extensive condition, concurrent with their participation in the initial interview. The reinforcement in this situation, that is, was part of the surrounding conditions of these subjects' behavior, available for all to see. According to the theory, the greater the reward one is offered to perform an action, the less likely one is to conclude that the behavior reflects his or her true disposition. Thus the greater effects on self--perception might be expected in the minor request-normal reinforcement condition on the basis of the theory.

Contrary to most of the theoretical positions of the self-perception approach, the results of Experiment 2 found extensively reinforced subjects more susceptible to a later request than mildly reinforced participants, who were, in turn, more acquiescent than the untreated control subjects. These results are consistent with the findings of Dejong and Funder (1977), who attempted to verify the self-perception interpretation of the foot-in-the-door phenomenon by demonstrating that subjects who were paid to participate in a brief interview would be less susceptible to subsequent interview requests than those who participated initially without offer of payment. (Presumably, paid subjects would attribute their initial compliance to the reward, and would not alter their self-perceptions in the direction of altruism or co-operation.) Contrary to these theoretical expectations, however, Dejong and Funder (1977) found paid subjects to be more acquiescent to a later request for participation in an unpaid interview than those who were offered no money for their initial participation. While these results are inexplicable in self-perception terms, they are consistent with our proposed reinforcement

explanation of the phenomenon, and serve to bolster our interpretation of the findings of the second experiment.

A consideration of the total data pattern of this research area suggests the adoption of the social reinforcement orientation as the most plausible explanation of the FITD phenomenon. This approach has been shown to explain previous findings generated within the self-perception framework, and to predict successfully outcomes in past and present research that are inconsistent with the expectations of self-perception theory. This is not to say that the self-perception process described so persuasively by Bem does not operate. The types of cognitive realignments proposed in his theory might well have taken place in the present experiments; but if such changes did occur, they did not result in patterns of observable behaviors consistent with theoretically derived expectations. And even if the theory did provide the means by which the observed behaviors were predicted, parsimony would still suggest the adoption of the alternative social reinforcement position, as this approach accounted for all of the observed behaviors without the necessity of postulating the operation of unobservable cognitive modifications in subjects' self-concepts. Parsimony and predictive efficiency both suggest that at least in this area of research, the focus be concentrated on the predictive implications of the social reinforcement position.

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Footnotes

1. The brief telephone interview, a typical arrangement of much past research, might provide a subject with both primary and secondary reinforcements. As noted, we are socialized in such a manner that altruistic behaviors are themselves reinforcing. In addition, another's expressed appreciation of our altruism might also provide a potent reinforcement.

2. Since all comparisons between treatment conditions were stated or implied in the development of this research, a series of planned comparisons between acquiescence proportions were carried out, rather than an overall test in which all treatments are compared simultaneously with all others (cf., Crano & Brewer, 1973). All p values in this study are one-tailed.

3. "Standard operating procedures" here include a trivial initial request which taxes neither the patience nor the temporal or financial resources of the respondents. At the completion of the typical session, the subject is thanked politely, and leaves the situation in a positive frame of mind, secure in the knowledge that he or she has selflessly performed a service on behalf of an appreciative other.

4. This is not meant to imply that the social reinforcement position perfectly orders all the data in this area. Some obvious discrepancies between predicted and obtained results are readily available (cf. Uranowitz, 1975). However, in none of the negative cases has the provision of reinforcement come under explicit experimental control, and thus the true predictive accuracy of our position remains moot in these apparent negative instances.

Table 1. Responses to the Moderate Request as a Function of Treatment Condition: Experiment 1

Condition	Acquiescence	Rejection
Minor Request-Positive	21 (3)	11 (3)
Minor Request-Positive (control)	23 (2)	9 (2)
Minor Request-Negative	9 (0)	20 (3)
Major Request	7 (1)	24 (1)
Untreated Control	10	22

Note: Parenthesized values refer to the number of subjects in each condition who responded inappropriately to the initial request. Removing these subjects from the analysis had no appreciable effect on the pattern of results, and thus, they were included in all analyses.

Table 2. Responses to the Moderate Request as a Function of Treatment Condition: Experiment 2

Condition	Acquiescence	Rejection
Minor Request - Normal	14	11
Minor Request - Extensive	19	6
Control	8	17